



State Council on Developmental Disabilities

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NEW STRATEGIC PLAN BY STATE COUNCIL WILL CHANGE LIVES OF CALIFORNIANS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

SACRAMENTO – The State Council on Developmental Disabilities has crafted an unprecedented strategic plan to improve, enrich and enhance the lives of Californians with developmental disabilities. The Council, composed of 29 Governor-appointed members, spent the past two years surveying people with disabilities to determine how the Council can best help in their right to community inclusion. In California, there are more than 200,000 people with developmental disabilities receiving services from the Department of Developmental Services.

“The State Council exists to help the developmental disability system provide effective services and supports for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families,” said the State Council’s Chair, Sascha Bittner. Bittner, 33, is also a member of her local Area Board 5.

Promoting the full inclusion of Californians with developmental disabilities in all chosen aspects of community life is a crucial goal for the State Council. Taking its cue from Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger’s Executive Order to promote employment of people with disabilities at the state level, the Council will collaborate with state agencies to educate employers and eliminate barriers in the hiring process.

One of the key goals of the strategic plan includes advancing the rights and abilities of all Californians with developmental disabilities to exercise self-advocacy and self-determination. Historically, people with disabilities had little say in the decisions made about their lives and were given limited choices in the areas of education, recreation and independent living. Objectives under this key goal include increasing the number of self-advocates in area boards - 13 boards are spread statewide - by providing them with training so they can also participate in peer groups.

Another key goal of the plan is to increase the State Council’s visibility in shaping public policy. The objectives include supporting legislation that increases access to more quality services as well as establish funding for services over a person’s lifetime, educating lawmakers and health professionals on the need for early developmental screenings for all children. The State Council will conduct and complete an evaluation of California’s service delivery system and make recommendations. The Council will also advocate for the State to apply for a Social Security waiver so people with disabilities can accrue up to \$10,000 in savings.

The Council will work to promote adoption of the federal definition of developmental disabilities which covers a broader area than the state definition by increasing the age of persons whose disability occurs before age 22 as opposed to age 18 and includes a mental or physical impairment or a combination of both. The person must have a significant limitation in three or more of these areas: self-care; expressive or receptive language; learning; mobility; capacity for independent living; economic self-sufficiency; or self-direction. In California, the number of people with developmental disabilities as federally defined totals approximately 662,400.